

# **Injecting Fresh Impetus into Professional Military Education with Peace Education**

——Speech by President of the PLA NDU at the 25<sup>th</sup> ARF HDUCIM

Dear Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning! I'm very pleased to join you in a candid discussion about the PME in the beautiful city of Kuala Lumpur. Currently, given the profound changes in the world landscape and ongoing regional conflicts, human society is once again standing at the crossroads of cooperation and confrontation, and of peace and war. Under this new circumstances, how professional military education should grasp the trend of historical development, make the right strategic choice, effectively prevent conflicts and wars, and maintain regional and global security, has become a major question in front of us.

The theme of this meeting is of great practical value. Incorporating peace education in professional military education conforms to the right direction of history, opens up new horizon for us, and also injects fresh impetus into professional military education. In this connection, I want to make the following three observations.

**First, peace education inspires transformation of ideas to help professional military education play a positive role in a world with increasing uncertainties.**

According to traditional understanding, the military is an instrument of organized violence, and military education serves to enhance the effectiveness of such instrument. Therefore, the purpose of military education is to prepare for winning wars by imparting war knowledge and strengthening war training. Obviously, this view has its limitations. Compared with World War II and the Cold War period, the world has undergone tremendous changes today. While the international system is being constantly improved and countries are increasingly dependent on one another, major powers have enough military capabilities to destroy the earth dozens of times over. Against such backdrop, war is no longer the main resolution to conflicts of interest among countries. Preparing for fighting and winning wars is no longer the sole goal of professional military education.

Peace education injects valuable and practical elements into today's professional military education, prompting us to reexamine the philosophy based on which we reshape our professional military education. Peace education promotes nonviolent ways of resolving conflicts and disputes to reduce the suffering to human society from conflicts and wars; peace education advocates

interreligious dialogue and values mutual learning and exchanges among cultures; peace education emphasizes the importance of rules and systems as well as the stability of the international order; peace education stresses eco-friendly production mode and opposes unlimited exploitation of natural resources. Peace education embodies the philosophy of reflecting the aspirations of humanity and contributing to the long-term peace and stability of the international community. If it takes deep root in the heart of the people, they will undoubtedly play a very important role in shaping and building the forces for peace. The core concept of peace studies originates from the East, and most Asian countries also have a peace-loving tradition. Especially in modern times, Asian countries have been victimized by the aggression and colonization of foreign powers and experienced the ravages of war. The people of Asia understand the cruelty of war and the value of peace more than people in other countries. This provides an important prerequisite for us to carry out peace education.

The famous political scientist Max Weber pointed out, “Yet very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamics of interest.” This is exactly the role played by peace education, i.e. not only bringing about a transformation of concept on war and peace, but also exerting a subtle influence on the military policies and actions of countries through

professional military education. It further makes us realize that the purpose of military actions is not to win wars, but to shape and win peace. It will help to drive military decision-makers of tomorrow to focus more on the long-term development of the entire humanity and the well-being of global population when formulating military policies. It will also encourage countries to increase their willingness and habit of resolving issues through peaceful means, even in times of war, by approaching conflicts from a humanitarian standpoint and consciously limiting the scope and intensity of conflicts. The aforementioned transformation will help reduce confrontation and strengthen cooperation for reconciliation on a global scale, thereby adding certainty to this uncertain era.

**Second, peace education offers a broader horizon to expand the contents and functions of professional military education.**

Conventionally, professional military education mostly involved contents and functions that aimed to enhance the war fighting capability of the military. In a practical sense, this was understandable because in an international environment centered on zero-sum game and position of strength, a victory in war practically meant acquiring almost all the expected strategic outcomes. Therefore, in line with practical national interests, professional military education was committed to teaching combat skills, war histories, battle examples and operational command in order to build comparative advantage

and ensure victory in war. However, as the world trends towards a community with a shared future and the political nature of war comes to the fore, professional military education would fall out of step with our times if it sticks to convention. We need to find a better way for professional military education to serve our national strategic goals and to advance the common interests and values of humanity.

In this respect, peace education offers a broader horizon to view peace and war in a context of macro-history. Always committed to the long-term development of human society, peace education views the international community as a community with a shared future and proposes joint efforts across the board to address global issues. It supports inter-state, intra-state and interpersonal harmony, and opposes conflicts and wars. It believes that ultimately war and violence will be subject to a trial by law and justice, and should be put under strict constraints. Peace education proposes that all countries in pursuit of their own development should uphold international ethics and responsibilities; that they should share what's good for their own prosperity and avoid seeding chaos and wars beyond their own borders; and that they should respect their differences, consult with each other to form consensus, and live and prosper together. Of course, peace education is not about opposing all wars or fearing wars. When faced with brutalities and violence that trample on the common values of humanity in case of a forced, unavoidable war, peace education

supports a war of justice against a war of injustice.

Peace education contains useful ideas that we can apply in developing today's professional military education. The famous strategist Basil Liddell-Hart asserts that "The object of war is a better state of peace. If your only focus is victory, not the consequences, you will be too exhausted to reap the benefits of peace." His words are still relevant today. Nowadays the rules of the jungle and the gunboat have become history, today's professional military education should shift its focus on preventing war and building peace, improve teaching and training in international military cooperation, humanitarianism and post-war peace building, enhance the ability of all militaries to execute the above efforts, and thereby make its due contribution to regional peace. The PLA has already begun such practices in its universities, colleges and institutions. *The Art of War* by Sun Zi, as you all know, is a book on war, but is based very much on pacifist thought. The notions such as "be cautious in war", "no war" have always been the essential part of the Chinese military education. Confucius, the revered ancient Chinese teacher, enlightened us that "don't do unto others what you don't want to be done unto you" "In practicing rules of propriety, peace is the most precious". These ideas have long been infused into our education system. In some of our institutional training programs, joint exercises, international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance have gained further prominence. We

hope that more countries can join this effort to explore a new model of professional military education.

**Thirdly, peace education builds trust and consensus to facilitate international exchanges on professional military education.**

In essence, peace education is about care for life. Its two pillars are the respect for life and the creation of trust. Peace education upholds the belief that every life on earth is independent and valuable; races and civilizations differ only in their characteristics and geographical distribution, not in superiority and quality; all nations and countries, big or small, are equal and should not be invaded. These beliefs, full of human virtues and shared values, are a major force for good in the international community. Meanwhile, peace education advocates people-to-people and state-to-state exchanges. Such exchanges can reduce biases and hostilities among groups and countries, improve trust through deep cooperation, and thereby minimize the chances of conflicts.

Peace education philosophy carries implications for the progress of professional military education. My dear colleagues here come from different countries. Our respective countries vary in size, but share the same goal in promoting regional peace and development. All countries, big or small, are equal as they advocate world peace and justice. Any initiative or measure that benefits the international

community and promotes peace and development in Asia-Pacific should be integrated timely and effectively into professional military education. At the same time, professional military education should be at the forefront of international military exchanges. We propose exchanges in a wider range of fields. In teaching activities, we can establish peacekeeping projects and conduct training in joint humanitarian actions; in the field of academic research, we can launch research fellowships and create mechanisms to share outcomes; in people-to-people exchanges, we can conduct exchange of lectures and visiting scholar programs among ARF HDUCIM members. Cooperation on multiple fronts will enhance the peace building capabilities of regional countries, and effective, in-depth cooperation in this regard will boost mutual understanding and strategic trust.

To conclude, amid ever-intensifying global challenges and regional turbulences, humanity is again at a crossroads. It is the common wish of all peoples around the world to build sustainable civilization and peace. As President Xi Jinping pointed out “We Asian people hope to see peace and stability across Asia. Upholding peace is the responsibility of every country”, we, as professionals in military education, take a special responsibility in building peace. Let us bear in mind the past and the future with more open and inclusive attitude, and take more effective practical measures, to drive the development of professional military education for the common good of world peace and human well-being.